

RESOLUTION NO. 20131107-052

WHEREAS, Austin Energy has residential customers with high past-due balances, many of whom are low-income customers; and

WHEREAS, a large number of residential customers are at risk of having their utilities disconnected or have already received service disconnections; and

WHEREAS, the loss of critical utilities threatens health and safety, and once utilities are disconnected a family may be unable to maintain housing; and

WHEREAS, the City should ensure that, at a minimum, low-income households are provided the resources to maintain critical utility services; and

WHEREAS, such resources should include strategies and protections against termination for the most vulnerable populations, such as the elderly, critically ill, or households with young children; and

WHEREAS, one strategy some utilities use to prevent terminations is an arrearage management plan; and

WHEREAS, evidence suggests that arrearage management plans have a positive impact on utility revenues; and

WHEREAS, the City has a fiscal and legal obligation to ensure that the utility collects payment for utility service; and

WHEREAS, deferred payment arrangements that are reasonable, realistic, and tailored to each customer's financial circumstances would also provide protection against disconnection; and

WHEREAS, customers experiencing high utility bills, including excessive water usage, should be provided information about usage reduction strategies including options for participation in energy efficiency rebate and low-income weatherization programs, as well as water conservation rebates and education; **NOW, THEREFORE,**

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF AUSTIN:

That the City Manager is directed to work with the Discount Steering Committee and other consumer advocates to develop revised rules for deferred payment plans and service disconnections;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED

That the City Manager work with the Discount Steering Committee and consumer advocates to develop an arrearage management plan, taking into consideration best practices from other cities, and including strategies for incentivizing customers for honoring payment agreements;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED

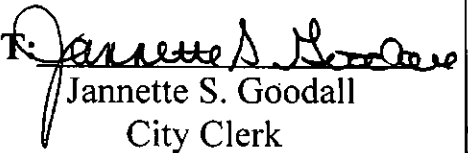
That the City Manager work with this group to develop appropriate customer service practices for providing information to customers entering into deferred payment plans about resources available to customers through Austin Energy or the Austin Water Utility, including eligibility for customer assistance programs, participation in energy efficiency rebate and/or low income weatherization, and education on usage management strategies;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

That the City Manager provide the recommendations of the Discount Steering Committee and consumer advocates to the Electric Utility Commission, the Resource Management Commission, and the Water and Wastewater Commission for their review and approval and to the City Council no later than six months after the adoption of this resolution.

ADOPTED: November 7, 2013

ATTEST:


Jannette S. Goodall
City Clerk